

Full Report On Khashoggi's Killing By Tuesday, Says Donald Trump

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President Donald Trump on Saturday said he had spoken with CIA Director Gina Haspel on the agency's finding that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and that there will be a "very full report" by Tuesday.

The Washington Post first reported Friday that the CIA had assessed with high [confidence the Saudi leader's role](#), based on multiple sources of intelligence.

But the president had already been shown evidence of the prince's alleged involvement in the killing, and privately he remains skeptical, Trump aides said. He has also looked for ways to avoid pinning the blame on Mohammed, the aides said.

Trump spoke with Haspel and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during his flight to California to tour areas damaged by the wildfires, White House press secretary Sarah Sanders told reporters aboard Air Force One.

While touring fire damage Malibu, California, Trump confirmed that he had spoken with Haspel. Asked about reports that the CIA had [assessed involvement by Mohammed](#), the president said: "They haven't assessed anything yet. It's too

early."

"It's a horrible thing that took place, the killing of a journalist," he said, adding that there would be a "a report on Tuesday" that will address what "we think the overall impact was and who caused it, and who did it."

Saudi consulate in Turkey.

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert issued a statement Saturday that did not directly address the CIA's findings about Mohammed or mention him.

"Recent reports indicating that the U.S. government has made a final conclusion are inaccurate," she said. "There remain numerous unanswered questions with respect to the murder of Mr. Khashoggi. The State Department will continue to seek all relevant facts. In the meantime, we will continue to consult Congress, and work with other nations to hold accountable those [involved in the killing of Jamal Khashoggi](#)."

The Post and other media outlets have reported on the CIA's assessment but have not said the U.S. government reached a conclusion about what happened to Khashoggi.

The president's skepticism has put him at odds with the findings of the CIA and senior intelligence officials.

Haspel and John Bolton, the national security adviser, have briefed Trump on the intelligence community's findings, with Haspel offering pieces of evidence that show lieutenants of Mohammed were directly involved in the killing, according to people familiar with the matter.

In conversations with his intelligence and national security advisers, the president has seized on the question of whether evidence shows that Mohammed "ordered" Khashoggi's death, asserting that his advisers haven't offered him definitive proof. He has also asked CIA and State Department officials where Khashoggi's body is and has grown frustrated that the journalist's remains haven't been found.

Khashoggi was a contributor to The Post's Global Opinions section.

Referring to the crown prince, Trump told reporters Saturday, "As of this moment, we were told that he did not play a role; we're going to have to find out what they say."

The president didn't specify who had said Mohammed had played no role.



funeral'. (AFP)

The CIA did not respond to a request for comment.

But within the White House, there has been little doubt that Mohammed was behind the killing.

"This is a situation where everyone basically knows what happened," said one adviser who talks to Trump often. This person said Trump has repeatedly criticized how Mohammed has handled the situation and has said it is clear they are hiding facts.

The Saudis have offered contradictory explanations for what happened to Khashoggi after he stepped inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul on Oct. 2 to obtain documents for his upcoming marriage.

Once inside, Khashoggi was set upon by a team of Saudi agents who had flown to Istanbul to kill him, according to intelligence assessments by the United States and European governments. The team is thought to have dismembered Khashoggi and disposed of his remains.

The CIA analyzed audio recordings from inside the consulate, which were provided by the Turkish government, as well as intercepted phone calls, according to people familiar with the matter. One of those calls was placed by a member of the hit team from inside the consulate to a senior aide to Mohammed, informing him that the killing had taken place, according to people familiar with the call.

The Saudi government has insisted that the prince knew nothing of the operation, which it has blamed on rogue actors who went beyond their authority in a mission meant to bring Khashoggi back to Saudi Arabia. Khashoggi had written critically of Mohammed's policies and was living in a self-imposed exile in Virginia out of concern for his safety in his native country.

"The claims in this purported assessment are false," Fatimah Baeshen, a spokeswoman for the Saudi Embassy in Washington, said of the CIA findings. "We have and continue to hear various theories without seeing the primary basis for these speculations."

For more than a month, Trump has struggled to balance his interest in maintaining strong relations with the Saudi government with growing pressure in Congress and around the world to punish the Saudi regime. Trump has told aides that he wants Mohammed to stay in power and that he sees the Saudis as the best strategic check on Iran and as a vital source of oil. Mohammed has a close relationship with Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser who helps to lead the administration's Middle East strategy.

This past week, the Saudi public prosecutor acknowledged that a team of Saudi agents had killed Khashoggi, but he claimed that they had been sent only to bring him back to Saudi Arabia. The prosecutor has brought charges against 11 people he characterized as part of a rogue operation, and he said he would seek the death penalty for five of those involved.

The U.S. Treasury Department also announced that it would freeze the assets of 17 Saudi individuals and prohibit companies from doing business with them.

On Friday evening, Kirsten Fontenrose, the National Security Council official in charge of U.S. policy toward Saudi Arabia, resigned, administration officials said. The circumstances of her departure weren't clear. But Fontenrose had previously been placed on administrative leave, according to people familiar with the matter.

Fontenrose had played a key role in the administration's decision about which Saudis to sanction in response to Khashoggi's killing, these people said.

Fontenrose's departure was first reported by the New York Times.

Trump has accused the Saudi government of trying to cover up its role. But he has looked for ways to avoid blaming Mohammed, aides and advisers said. He has thought about scenarios in which Mohammed would not have known what his underlings were doing, one adviser said.

"It is possible that this took place without his knowledge," Trump said in an interview last month with The Post. "And now they are trying to clean up a mess."

That also contradicts the CIA's findings. The agency determined that because Mohammed exercises absolute authority in the kingdom, it was inconceivable that an operation of such scale - involving 15 agents traveling internationally on government aircraft - could have been completed without the prince's knowledge and authorization, according to people who are familiar with the agency's conclusions.

Moreover, several members of the hit team can be tied directly to Mohammed. Some worked on his security detail, and others have traveled in the United States at the same time as the prince or other senior Saudi officials, passport records and other public information show.

Trump has made clear to European allies that he is uninterested in a joint response to the killing, even as pressure mounts to hold the Saudi regime accountable, according to a diplomat briefed on the calls.

The adviser who talks to Trump said: "If the president had his way, he would stay entirely out of the Middle East and all of the problems. This is a problem that he

wants to go away."

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